

Meeting Notes



Downtown Action Team

June 30, 2004

8:00 a.m.

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

1144 M Street

<i>Members Present</i>	Jon Camp (absent) Jim Fram Lynnie Green Matt Harris Deb Johnson (absent) Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth Lori McClug	Annette McRoy Sachit Nadkarni Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur Mike Sisk Clay Smith	Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek (absent) Becky Van de Bogart Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg Terry Werner
<i>Others Present</i>	David Cary Carol Connor Brandon Garrett Ann Harrell	Marvin Krout Dallas McGee Polly McMullen Kent Morgan	Darl Naumann Myrna Tewes Michele Abendroth

1. Call to Order/Welcome

Cecil Steward called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. He introduced himself and Jon Weinberg as the Co-Chairs of the Downtown Action Team. He stated that he believes this is a very important opportunity to continue the great planning in and around the center of the City, as well as to look to the future and establish a new vision and new direction for downtown. We have outstanding consultants in Crandall Arambula on this plan, and they will be very involved in the process.

Mr. Steward then asked each of the members of the committee to state their most important aspiration for the outcome of this process.

Michelle Waite stated that she believes a Master Plan provides a road map for downtown and drives many of the decisions of downtown as well as the City. As a representative of the University, they are anxious to be a partner in this process.

Becky Van de Bogart stated that as a resident of downtown, keeping downtown is extremely vital in order to make it a housing area that people want to be part of.

Jane Stricker remarked that her priorities revolve around retail/small businesses and beautification.

Clay Smith noted that it is important to build on the strengths with Antelope Valley and the potential of possibly growing to the west and to the south. He feels it is important to take those land masses and create opportunities for existing businesses and agencies to grow.

Mike Sisk stated that he represents the landlord agency for the federal government, and this is good for them to see what areas are developing.

Nader Sepahpur remarked that he would like to see the City grow in a way that is a true representation of the community.

Lynnie Green stated that she would like to see the focus on Generation X and remember that the reason we are here is to focus on the future.

Jim Fram stated that planning is needed in order to grow and putting a document together for the growth of downtown will give a leg up on expansion.

Terry Werner stated that his number one priority is to give downtown an identity, both architecturally and in terms of marketing. He also feels it is crucially important to connect the Harmarket, the University, downtown, and Antelope Valley and to make it an area that is walkable.

Kent Seacrest noted that he would like to see a strong University retail corridor to connect the University and downtown. He also believes we need to ensure that south of 'O' Street continues to keep pace with north of 'O' Street.

Sachit Nadkarni commented that he is impressed by the downtown and would like to see it more vibrant.

Annette McRoy stated that she would like to see a cohesive plan for downtown. Downtown should be a unique place for everyone, no matter where you live.

Lori McClurg noted that her focus is to ensure that employees want to come downtown to work.

Dan Massoth stated that his priorities are to have more housing as well as to connect the Haymarket, downtown, the University, and Antelope Valley. He also feels that walkability is very important.

Jessica Kennedy stated that her priority is sustainability and viability, and we must create a plan that balances the needs of the visitor and employees with entertainment.

Matt Harris remarked that he hopes the Master Plan will develop a clear vision of where we are going so we can better determine how the smaller pieces of the puzzle can help support that plan.

Jon Weinberg stated that there are a lot of major pieces that have changed since the last downtown plan. He would like to address where Lincoln will be 10 years from today instead of always trying to look back.

Cecil Steward joked that he would like a downtown that the football team can be proud of. This means there must be excellence in all regards. He also believes there must be connectivity in the transportation system.

2. Self Introductions by Committee and Staff

All members of the Team introduced themselves.

3 Why a Downtown Master Plan?

Mr. Steward introduced Marvin Krout, Planning Director. Mr. Krout stated that Omaha has left Lincoln with a challenge, specifically, that we are going to have to work very hard to become a vibrant area. The way to do that is to focus on the downtown.

He then listed his Top 10 reasons why we need a Downtown Master Plan.

1. What are the next big projects? We have been successful in the last plans, but we don't have the shorter term projects that will keep the downtown alive.
2. The world is different. We need an overall long-term, overarching view of how everything is going to mesh together. This community is changing dramatically and is going to be very different in the future in terms of a demographic standpoint.
3. Get our oars in the water. Downtown is competing for a limited pot of local public funding. We haven't kept up with infrastructure needs to continue to grow. The only money in the Capital Improvement Plan for the downtown is to build a parking garage. We need to have a plan to raise consciousness of what the downtown means symbolically for the community.
4. Develop champions among the downtown leaders.
5. What, when, where and how of public buildings. There are a lot of potential public building projects over the next several years and how those pieces come together is very important. These projects include possible arena/convention facilities, a central library, a parking garage, and a multi-modal transportation center.
6. Development-ready sites, so that we can respond when a large employer wants to locate here.
7. Retail strategy. Retail is probably one of the weakest elements and should be the focus of the community. We need to think about what is authentic about Lincoln and build on that.
8. Streets and open spaces. There is a lot of need for updating, and we need central open space and less use of land for parking purposes.
9. Antelope Valley and its relationship to downtown. We need to spell out what it means to have Antelope Valley compete, but not conflict, with the downtown.
10. A bike lane study and bus shuttle study.

4. Review Downtown Plans and Outcomes

Dallas McGee began by reviewing the history of the previous downtown plans. He stated that he was very impressed with how visionary the 1973 Barton Aschman Plan was. The focus of the plan was to emphasize implementation. There is a very detailed implementation strategy that pulls everything together. It talks about development districts in downtown. The first district is called Old Town, which today is called the Haymarket. The second district is called Q Place district, which today is the Entertainment District. The plan also talked about circulation. One-way streets had just been implemented and were looked at as an efficient way to move traffic. It also talked about parking and addressing that need. Pedestrian circulation is also identified. It also suggested looking at tunnels. One of the key elements of the plan was to use enabling

legislation. It also talks about the relationship of downtown and how to strengthen it. Finally, it looks at conference and exhibition space.

When looking at that plan, what this plan can do is put a collective vision together in way that will guide us for the next 10-20 years.

The 1985 Lincoln Center Redevelopment Plan was an implementation oriented plan. It used tax increment financing to implement a number of projects. Golds Galleria was developed into an office building, and the Cornhusker Hotel and Office Building were built. TIF funds were used on these projects and will be used on several projects as this plan continues to be implemented.

Kent Morgan noted that it is important to recognize that the earlier downtown plan became an integral part of the 1977 Comprehensive Plan, and as we begin to develop the 2025, we will continue to look at the role of downtown.

He then reviewed the vision statement identified in the Comprehensive Plan. It focuses on the role of downtown as the major office and service employment center of the City, the focus of all levels of government, the City's principle cultural and entertainment center, the hotel and convention center for the City, the City's financial center, a hub of higher education, and specialty retail geared toward employees, area residents, convention visitors and University population.

5 Selection Process for Master Plan Consultants

Next, Polly McMullen talked about two short term plans. Both of these were borne out of some sense of urgency. The first was StarVenture, a community wide strategic planning effort. Much of the focus was the downtown which was in a crisis at the time, due to retail closing and office space sitting empty. In the mid-1980's, the City, along with the private sector, decided to try and salvage retail and build a six block retail mall project. They brought in a national developer to do this. In 1985, the voters approved \$12 million in general obligation bonds for this retail project. That obviously didn't happen, but a lot of effort went into it over three years. Two national developers decided the project wasn't financially feasible. 1989 was the lowest point in downtown, because the effort to salvage retail had failed.

StarVenture was asked to develop a new vision. In three or four months, the process brought in a whole battery of outside speakers from across the country. It evolved into the mixed use of downtown that we have today. They defined 40 - 45 strategies to make that mixed use happen. Additional parking was deemed as an imperative. Festivals and events were important to keep downtown as a community center. The theater policy was reaffirmed and strengthened. The key recommendation was that the bond voters had approved in 1985 be expended on the mixed use concept, which was very controversial. This 1989 effort set the stage for a lot of projects including the Burnham Yates Conference Center and the addition of 2,500 parking stalls.

The second effort was the *Investment Strategy for a Competitive Downtown*. This effort was undertaken by DLA and the Chamber of Commerce in 1998. They needed to jumpstart development and private investment. They hired a team from Denver, and within 5 months had a solid plan that was a series of projects designed to be a catalyst to other development in

downtown. One hundred percent of this investment strategy was implemented.

6. Review Master Plan Process, Study Area, Timeline & Schedule

Jon Weinberg reviewed the process for the Downtown Master Plan. He noted that Request for Proposals were sent to 35 firms. Twelve firms submitted proposals. The selection team met on several occasions and short-listed four firms. They interviewed all four finalists and unanimously selected Crandall Arambula. They stood out on their work with Portland and the fact that the two principals will be involved with the project. The references on their past work were outstanding. Cecil Steward mentioned that they have an excellent national reputation as well.

Kent Morgan noted that the purpose of the study is to identify areas where we can invest public and private money. He also briefly reviewed the scope of work. Phase 1 is the identification of issues. Second is to identify the vision for downtown. Last is to narrow the options to come up with a specific plan with all the details. There are also two additional studies; one is a downtown transit shuttle and second is a downtown bicycle facilities plan.

The staff contacts for the process are Polly McMullen, Dallas McGee, and Kent Morgan. This process is a joint effort between the City and DLA.

As previously mentioned, Crandall Arambula is the consultant for this process. There are two sub-contractors as well; these are ERA, which is a market analysis firm, and Nelson Nygaard, which is a transportation firm.

The process is estimated to take 8-12 months. He then reviewed the dates for the upcoming meetings and workshops. When determining the study area, they looked at what would make a logical area for planning purposes. The primary area is defined as 150 feet east of 17th Street to 7th Street on the west, south of H Street, a portion of the University, and the Haymarket area.

Mr. Morgan then spoke in reference to the public process. He stated that this committee is the sounding board for downtown and the public process. They will also make presentations to several organizations. The webpage for the study has already been designed, and will include the schedule of events, a 'What's New' section, the study background and process, a community comment form, and the meeting materials and minutes.

Mr. Werner asked why the boundaries of the study area don't extend further east. Mr. Morgan replied that traditionally downtown ends at 17th Street. Also, Antelope Valley comes up to 17th Street, and they want to interface with that process.

Mr. Morgan then briefly reviewed the meeting protocol. He asked the group to review the handout and stated that the contents will be voted upon at the next meeting.

Mr. Steward stated that media contact is essential in order to make this process successful in terms of public involvement. He asked if there were any volunteers to work with the media. Jessica Kennedy volunteered to serve in this capacity.

7. Committee Questions, Discussion

Mr. Werner stated that he would like to see more discussion incorporated into the process as opposed to solely presentations. He hopes that each meeting will have time for committee discussion. Mr. Steward replied that they feel committee discussion is important, and it is up to each member to cause that to happen.

8. Adjourn

Mr. Steward thanked the committee and stated that he is looking forward to having a great deal of success from this process. He adjourned the meeting at 9:22 a.m.

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